



CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD

GENERAL SESSION MEETING #688

MARCH 10, 2006



Vice Chairman Leo P. Burke
Jake Alarid, Board Member
William D. Jackson, Board Member

Vernon Chong, Board Member
Alice Astafan, Board Member
Randal Bressette, Board Member

The California Veterans Board met at City Council Chambers, Ventura, California at 9:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Board Members Leo P. Burke Vice-Chairman, Vernon Chong, William D. Jackson, Randal Bressette, Alice Astafan, Jake Alarid

Absent: None

Vice Chair Burke presided.

INVOCATION

David Salopek, Invocation

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

John Smith, Pledge of Allegiance

WELCOMING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION

Vice Chair Burke introduced Honorable Mayor of Ventura Carl Morehouse. Mayor Morehouse said he and the entire city of Ventura would like to welcome the California Veterans Board to Ventura. He thanked the Board for its hard work and for the good things they have done for the neighborhood, country, and the United States.

ELECTION OF CHAIR

Board member Bressette moved to rearrange this item (Item 6) and 11-b to follow Item 14 on the Agenda. Board member Alarid seconded. The vote was as follows:

AYES: Board member Alarid, Astafan, Burke, Bressette, Chong, Jackson

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

Vice Chairman declared the motion carried.

OPENING REMARKS

California Veterans Board members were introduced. Vice Chair Burke introduced Undersecretary Roger Brautigan who, in turn, introduced Departmental Staff Members, Chief Legal Counsel Rob Wilson, Jerry Jones, and Annie Lehatto from the Smithgroup, and George Compton County Veterans Services Officer for the County of Ventura. Audience members introduced themselves to those present.

CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD CONSENT ITEMS

1. RESOLUTIONS FOR DEPARTING BOARD MEMBERS GEORGE SINOPOLI AND JAMES CRUMP

Vice Chair Burke informed the Board that the actual presentation would have to be reserved for a later time since neither Mr. Sinopoli nor Mr. Crump could attend today's meeting. Board member Jackson suggested that the Board adopt the resolutions today for presentation at a later time.

RECOMMENDATION

Board member Bressette moved that the Board adopt the resolutions for George Sinopoli and James Crump, amended to be signed by the Chairman of the California Veterans Board. Board member Chong seconded. The vote was as follows:

AYES: Board member Alarid, Bressette, Burke, Chong, Jackson, Astafan,

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

Vice Chairman declared the motion carried.

It was suggested by Board member Alarid that Mr. Sinopoli and Crump be invited to the Secretary's meeting in Sacramento in order to present the Resolutions to them. Board Member Chong said he felt it would be best to have all the Board members sign the resolutions and therefore, moved that the entire Board sign the resolutions. Board member Bressette seconded, and stated that as part of his original motion it was his intent that the Executive Officer would understand that the Resolutions would be appropriately printed and mounted.

AYES: Board member Alarid, Bressette, Burke, Chong, Jackson, Astafan,

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

Vice Chairman declared the motion carried.

2. OPENING REMARKS

Undersecretary Roger Brautigan introduced Joyce Styler.

3. MINUTES

Executive Officer, Sandra Munoz

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the minutes of the meeting held February 10, 2006

Board member Bressette moved to adopt the minutes of February 10, 2006. Board member Jackson seconded. The vote was as follows:

AYES: Board member Alarid, Astafan, Bressette, Burke, Chong, Jackson,

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

Vice Chairman declared the motion carried.

Board member Bressette said the closed session minutes are too detailed and he suggested that the Executive Officer meet with Advisory member Jackson to understand how future closed session minutes should be formatted. Advisory member Jackson recommended that the minutes of the closed session, if they are detailed and included in the Board's packet, be removed and not be made available to the public.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Appeals process posting on website. Board member Chong said that the Policies and Procedures Committee reviewed and drafted the California Veterans Board *Understanding the Appeal Process*, which can be found in the Board packet.

RECOMMENDATION

The Policies and Procedures Committee recommends the Board's approval of this document for inclusion on the website.

Board member Jackson moved approval. Board member Astafan seconded. The vote was as follows:

AYES: Board member Burke, Chong, Jackson, Bressette, Astafan, Alarid

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

Vice Chairman declared the motion carried.

Board Member Chong suggested that paper copies be made available for those people who do not have access to on-line services. In order to conserve paper the document can be printed in a smaller font and printed on both sides.

5. NEW BUSINESS

Vice Chair Burke said a notice of appeal from William Bry (#06-03) has been received and it has been assigned to him.

Discussion of Board policy: Each Veterans Home shall provide all necessary administrative support to the Home Board Member during their entire term. Board Member Chong discussed the draft policy and asked the Board to review it. This draft policy will be discussed at the next Board meeting. Discussion:

If Board members are not comfortable with e-mail, then the appropriate staff member at a Home would receive the e-mails from the Executive Officer, or as they legally pass back and forth between Board members, it would be printed and delivered to them, and then if he or she have comments that staff member would e-mail them to whomever necessary. It was asked to have this policy adopted at today's meeting.

Board member Alarid moved approval of draft policy A-13 as presented. Board member Bressette seconded. The vote was as follows:

AYES: Board member Burke, Chong, Jackson, Bressette, Astafan, Alarid

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

Vice Chairman declared the motion carried.

6. SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS

Vice Chair Burke provided a legislative update and advised that there is no urgent legislation that should be acted upon at this time. Mr. Jerry Jones explained the legislative analysis process. Board Member Astafan asked what the Board's role is regarding legislative bills and if the Board should be working hand-in-hand with the Department in lobbying for appropriate legislative bills. Mr. Jones said that normally the Board's Legislative Chairman will review legislation involving Veterans and decide whether the Board should take position on it or not and present the findings at a regular meeting for the Board's vote.

Discussion:

Resolution HR-4297 was discussed. Mr. Jones advised that a resolution from the Board would be a good idea at this point.

The budget was discussed. Mr. Brautigan said the budget is still being negotiated and the Board does have input into the budget. If the Board desires to increase the budget, it should work with the Department, who will assist in the process of incorporating it into the budget.

7. CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE

a) Significant Developments – Ms. Annie Lehatto from the Smithgroup provided an update of the Satellite Veteran's Home in Ventura County.

Mr. Brautigan stated, regarding GLAVC, that staff has been working with local officials at all three sites, to include the follow-on homes in Fresno and Redding and all of these hinge upon the Los Angeles project. This is a challenging process but progress is being made. On March 15 a two hour session will be held with all of the key players and he will report the outcome at the April 7 Board meeting. On July 15 the State will need to make the decision to move forward with the project. In November the Public Works Board will go forward with the bids, and the contract winner will be awarded in March 2007.

Mr. Brautigan said it is unfortunate that Policy A-13 had to come to the Board's attention. If advised Mr. Jackson stated that if he doesn't get the service and support he needs from the Home to call him.

Mr. Brautigan updated the Board on Barstow. The Secretary has put forth a six year plan to get Barstow back up to full capacity and the first step, if next year's budget passes, will be to add an additional 20 ICF beds. Governor Schwarzenegger will be visiting the Home on March 17.

The Governor has appointed a new administrator for the Chula Vista Home and his name is Gil Acevedo. Member Jake Alarid complimented the Undersecretary and the Secretary on the appointment of Gil Acevedo to Administrator of the Veterans Home of Chula Vista. The department has an obligation to look at its diversity program and make the department look like California in terms of cultural diversity.

In the Governor's budget for 2006-2007, and if it passes and is approved, the design of the recreational center at Yountville will begin.

b) Veterans Homes Division

i. Nurse budgeting and recruiting problems at all Veterans Homes. Mr. Brautigan said this is an issue that staff is working very hard on and they are trying to develop a plan to address this shortfall.

c) Farm & Home Purchases Division – As discussed earlier, the Governor's office would entertain any help that the Board can provide through letters.

d) Veterans Services Division – Mr. Brautigan said on April 7 on the break between the Secretary's Conference and the California Veteran's Board meeting, there will be an unveiling ceremony of the upgrade to the Medal of Honor wall.

As a fundraiser, two golf tournaments will be held; one in Ventura on Friday June 2 and then one in northern California during Veteran's week. Beginning in October 2007 there will be a sanctioned professional golfer's association event near the Home site in Fresno, at the Running Horse Golf Course. The bulk of the charity money that they raise will go to local, state and national Veteran's programs. There will be a press event on March 16 at the Running Horse Golf course at 10:30 a.m. for any Board members who might be interested in attending.

Mr. Wilson updated the Board on the appeal of Veterans Jones and Nunez explaining that both appeals have been resolved. It was asked if Mr. Wilson could keep the Board apprised, as cases are resolved. Mr. Wilson said he has been providing the Executive Officer with updates as they occur.

In regards to donations, the Department of Finance believes they are the controlling agency and they can have say as to whether donations can be accepted to the CalVet fund. A proposal has been sent to the Department of Finance explaining why the Department has the authority to accept and spend donations, and why they should allow the Department to have a Vet fund as a separate account. This proposal is pending review and no taxpayer's dollars have been spent at this point.

8. ELECTION OF THE CHAIR

Board Member Chong nominated Leo Burke as the Chairman of the California Veteran's Board. Board Member Bressette seconded the motion for discussion.

Board member Alarid nominated Vernon Chong as the Chairman of the California Veteran's Board. Board Member Astafan seconded.

Board member Jackson moved to close the nominations. Vice Chair Burke seconded.

AYES: Board member Burke, Chong, Jackson, Bressette, Astafan, Alarid

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

Vice Chairman declared the motion carried.

Discussion: Mr. Bressette said he feels the Board should be taking a more active role in providing direction to the Department, both as required by law and as a necessity to be able to provide assistance to the Veterans; and a more active role in state and federal legislation. He is looking forward to moving forward with aggression. Mr. Bressette respects and appreciates the past service of the Vice Chair but he will be supporting the nomination of Board Member Chong as Chairman.

Vice Chair Burke declined the nomination.

RECOMMENDATION

Board Member Alarid moved to elect Board Member Vernon Chong as Chairman of the California Veterans Board. Board Member Astafan seconded.

AYES: Board member Burke, Chong, Jackson, Bressette, Astafan, Alarid

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

Vice Chairman declared the motion carried.

Board Member Astafan moved to elect Board Member Randal Bressette as Vice Chairman of the California Veterans Board. Board Member Alarid seconded.

AYES: Board member Burke, Chong, Jackson, Bressette, Astafan, Alarid

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

9. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Chair Chong said he would like to delay making assignments to the Committee at today's meeting until he has had a chance to review this more closely. A notice will be sent to the Board soliciting their desire and input as to committees they may be interested in serving on.

10. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Board member Astafan said this Board should be in concert with the State. Her job, as a member of this Board, is to help do what is best for the Veterans.

11. OTHER UPDATES

Board member Astafan provided an announcement of a decision reached in closed session March 9, 2006 as follows: (1) to ensure full and impartial consideration of Veterans' appeals and policies, the Board reaffirms its need for, and intent to obtain the services of special counsel; (2) the Board will write a letter requesting the Attorney General's consent and designate a delegation to present the request to the Attorney General; (3) the Board is willing to pay for special counsel initially out of its existing budget; (4) the Board will seek the full support of the Secretary of Veteran's Affairs in this effort.

Mr. Bob Burke gave a brief description of the California State Commanders Veterans Council. Mr. John Borders, with the American Legion, invited Board members to the American Legion

Legislative Day at the State Capital on Tuesday, March 14 at 8:30 a.m. He provided background information for the American Legion.

12. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Vice Chair Bressette asked for Assembly Joint Resolution No. 32 to be placed on the agenda for the consideration of the Board to adopt and approve. Board member Jackson said, indirectly, the Board will support the resolution, but will also take its own position on this issue. Vice Chair Bressette stated that his request would also include all of the appropriate staff work.

Vice Chair Bressette would like to see the budget, as well as an update of where we are with the budget, on future agendas.

Meeting attendance was discussed.

13. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

David Salopek

Bob Handy

14. ADJOURNED at 11:45 p.m.